

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 699

By Dickerson

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Rabbi Randall M. Falk of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Rabbi Randall M. Falk of Nashville, a man of tremendous faith and integrity; and

WHEREAS, called “the conscience of the community”, Rabbi Randall Falk was the senior rabbi at Congregation Ohabai Shalom, The Temple from 1960 to 1986, and played a leading role in the civil rights movement in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Rabbi Randall Falk earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Cincinnati, completed his rabbinic ordination and Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters at Hebrew Union College, and earned a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Vanderbilt Divinity School; and

WHEREAS, before arriving in Nashville in 1960, Rabbi Falk served Congregation Anshe Hased in Erie, Pennsylvania, from 1947 to 1960, for which he was a consummate shepherd who shared in the joys and sorrows of each member of his flock; and

WHEREAS, after his arrival in Tennessee, Rabbi Randall Falk’s moral leadership extended to the wider Nashville community as a champion of civil rights. His thoughtful, loving, and peaceful manner reached across all religious faiths, incorporating each faith into the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, a glowing tribute authored by Keel Hunt in *The Tennessean*, describes how Rabbi Falk arrived in Nashville at a time of great social tumult as racial strife and persecution of Jews by Ku Klux Klansmen had shaken the city as just two years earlier the old Jewish Community Center had been bombed at night and synagogues had been also been bombed in Atlanta, Miami, and Jacksonville; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hunt relates that Rabbi Falk joined with local leaders in the civil rights movement, including the Reverend Kelly Miller Smith of First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill, to train

student activists in nonviolent protest and then organized, with the Reverend Sam Dodson of Calvary Methodist Church, the 1964 march of spiritual leaders to the Metro Courthouse to confront Nashville's new mayor, Beverly Briley, in an appeal for more acceptance of nonwhites in public agencies and accommodations, including public swimming pools; and

WHEREAS, Keel Hunt wrote: "One measure of a man's greatness is how surviving contemporaries remember his life and service." Rabbi Randall Falk's friend John Seigenthaler, who during the time was the editor of *The Tennessean*, said, "He was a conscience for the community without being intrusive or obnoxious about it. He would gently prod an element of the community in a direction he thought it should go by the power of his personality."; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Falk advised Mr. Seigenthaler in his paper's reporting that "we should not minimize the danger of the threat," which reared its ugly head again as on May 25, 1981, when the FBI stopped a plot to destroy Rabbi Falk's synagogue, arresting three Klan members who intended to destroy the facility and businesses owned by Jews; and

WHEREAS, an unwavering advocate for the rights of all people, Rabbi Randall Falk was named the founding chairman of the Metro Human Relations Commission by Mayor Briley and was also a member of the Executive Committee of the Covenant Association for Human Rights; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Falk is remembered as a man who "stood up when the good people of Nashville really needed to stand up," and as "a person who got involved with different kinds of people in an era when that was very unpopular"; and

WHEREAS, an involved civic leader, Rabbi Falk served as the president of the Nashville Council of Community Services and the Nashville Association of Rabbis, Priests, and Ministers, and served on numerous boards, including Meharry Medical College's board of directors, the housing board of the Nashville Council of Community Services, and the advisory boards of the Opportunities Industrialization Center, Alive Hospice of Nashville, Inc., and the Nashville Sane/Freeze; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Falk was also an important contributor to several national organizations, including the North American Board of the World Union of Progressive Judaism, the Shepherd Centers of America board of directors, and an honorary member of the Board of

Alumni Overseers at Hebrew Union College's Jewish Institute of Religion and the board of directors of the Southeastern Region Anti-Defamation League; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Falk was an officer of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and chairman of its Committee on Justice and Peace and vice-chairman of the Commission on Social Action; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Falk received numerous honors for his commitment to civil rights, including a special honor from the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee during a Freedom Seder, the Human Relations Award from both the Metropolitan Nashville Human Relations Commission and the Nashville chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, an Honorary Life Membership from the National Federation of Temple Youth, the Erie, Pennsylvania, Junior Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year Award, and the Community Brotherhood Award; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Falk's exceptional achievements were recognized by honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees from the University of the South and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion; and

WHEREAS, an outstanding educator, Rabbi Falk taught at Vanderbilt Divinity School and the School of Theology at the University of the South; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Falk sought to build bridges of understanding between people of different faiths, and he co-authored *Jews and Christians: A Troubled Family*, as well as *Jews and Christians: In Pursuit of Social Justice*. He also authored *Bright Eminence: The life and Thought of Jacob Rader Marcus*; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Randall Falk was preceded in death by his son, General Randall Marc Falk, and is survived by his beloved wife, Edna, his children, Heidi Falk Logan and Jonathan David Falk, and his three grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly should pause to remember the singular compassion, integrity, and moral fortitude of Rabbi Randall M. Falk, an exceptional religious and civic leader; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Rabbi Randall M. Falk, commemorate his

exemplary moral and civic leadership in Nashville and the State of Tennessee, and reflect upon his impeccable character, tremendous faith, and unfailing commitment to social justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Rabbi Randall M. Falk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.